Section V
CASE STUDIES OF REENACTOR EVENTS AT NATIONAL PARKS

Case Study A
"Battle Road 1999" at Minute Man NHP
April 17, 1999

Introduction

Many of the underlying affinities and differences between national parks and reenactors are revealed at the Battle Road event. This case study will illustrate many of the issues already discussed, including:

- the role of reenactors as traditional users of sites now in the NPS's care
- the importance of avocational reenactors in regular park interpretive programs
- the need for clear lines of communication within and between parks and reenactor groups when they negotiate with each other
- the necessity of building and maintaining direct relationships between park staff and reenactors
- the emergence of national umbrella groups as leaders in planning and running major events
- the appeal of preserved and reconstructed landscapes for reenactors (which can create connections with parks, but may also create tension when reenactors wish to use these landscapes for their own style of battle commemoration)
- how reenactor performances are shaped and limited by park history and geography
- the difficulty of trying to create "ceremonial" reenactments that lack the character of either ceremonies or reenactment

The battle

The events of April 19, 1775 are among the best known and best loved in the history of the American Revolution. Paul Revere's Ride, Lexington Green, Old North Bridge and the "shot heard round the world"—these iconic moments have been central to popular understanding of the Revolution for more than two centuries.

The events of Lexington and Concord began with a surprise raid by 800 British soldiers on caches of arms hidden in Concord, Massachusetts. After a night march from Boston, the British column passed through Lexington early on April 19, unaware that Paul Revere had warned the town's citizens of their approach. 77 armed "minutemen" awaited the red-coats on the town common to offer at least a show of resistance to the British military presence.

Participants' accounts suggest that the British intended only to surround and disarm the minutemen, while the colonists were on the point of dispersing. But in the tension of the moment, an unauthorized shot was fired. British regulars began to fire at will, leaving eight Americans dead.

The columns continued to Concord. Minutemen from several surrounding towns mustered there, as British soldiers searched for the now-relocated weapons and set the town's liberty pole on fire. Convinced the whole town was being burned, the minutemen decided to make a stand at the North Bridge on the Concord River.

As the two sides faced each other across the bridge, the British fired a volley and killed two Acton minutemen. The Americans returned fire, leaving a handful of British soldiers dead or wounded. These casualties had immense symbolic importance for both sides. Americans had been killed defending their homes; British soldiers had been fired on as they defended the lawful government of the colonies. Other towns have claimed that earlier confrontations constituted the *real* "shot heard round the world," but for most Americans then and now, the fighting at Lexington and Concord marked the true beginning of the American Revolution.

Surprised at the extent of the colonists' resistance, the British began a retreat along a road that became a strange battlefield, only a few hundred yards wide and 16 miles long. Beginning at Meriam's Corner, two miles from the North Bridge, they were harried by colonial militiamen, who were still continuing to gather throughout eastern Massachusetts. The regulars, trained for rigid battlefield maneuvers, were ill-equipped to fight back against enemies who sniped at them from behind natural cover. At the end of an exhausting march that cost them 273 dead and wounded men, the British reached safety in Boston, leaving the colonists with a tale of heroism and sacrifice that quickly became part of an emerging national consciousness.

Commemoration at Lexington and Concord

As the symbolic birthplace of the nation, Lexington and Concord have always been centers for commemoration and veneration. Much of this activity has focused on the iconic figure of the minuteman. In his study of Americans and their "sacred" battlefields, Edward Linenthal describes

> …the public construction of a uniquely American image of warriors, the minutemen, described by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1835 as "poor farmers who came up that day to defend their native soil," acting "from the simplest of instincts."
>
> These instinctive warriors were ceremonially perceived as men whose New England origins nurtured republican principles that protected them from the moral pollution of old-world warriors. Consequently, the minutemen became a powerful cultural model for generations of Americans at war and at peace… (Linenthal 11)

Some form of reenactment has been included in commemorative activity in Lexington and Concord since the early nineteenth century.[1] In 1822, twenty survivors of the Lexington fight helped to recreate the event on the town green. In the later part of the century, ceremonial companies of minutemen were formed in many of the towns that had contributed soldiers in 1775. A minuteman group was founded in Lexington in 1874 in anticipation of the national centennial, only to disband in 1876. Records of celebrations in Lexington and Concord in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggest that these minutemen companies have long been a prominent feature of local parades and ceremonies, especially during major anniversary celebrations.

The Lexington Minute Men reorganized in 1910, and have operated continuously since then. Some other town minuteman companies have similar long-term histories; others were reactivated as the national bicentennial approached. It seems likely that the popularity of historical reenactment during the Civil War centennial prompted some of this activity. In 1962, for instance, the town of Concord decided to sponsor "the mustering of a new company of militia to be known as the Concord Minute Men" to be active in schools and at civic events. More than 100 men answered this call for volunteers (Linenthal 17).

These town minutemen companies are important precursors of today's avocational reenactors. Rather than seeking to immerse themselves in past realities, as contemporary reenactors do, the ceremonial minutemen have tended to function more as fraternal organizations, with close ties to other civic groups. Their claim of "authenticity" comes not from painstaking attention to material detail, but from a sense of lineage that directly connects them—sometimes by blood ties, more often simply through long-term residence in the area or membership in a minuteman group—with the citizen-soldiers of 1775.

A Council of Minute Men coordinated the joint activities of these groups for several years, but has become inactive within the past decade. Leaders from the newer avocational reenactment community have emerged to take over the council's role. A loose affiliation of regional reenactor leaders, the Commanders' Roundtable, now acts as an organizing body for regional events involving large numbers of reenactors (including the town minuteman companies).

In 1894, Massachusetts declared April 19 a state holiday, Patriots Day. Today the holiday falls on the Monday closest to April 19, and has become associated for many people with the running of the Boston Marathon and the opening of the baseball season. However, a significant structure of patriotic commemoration continues in and around Boston. Lanterns are hung in the steeple of Old North Church; Paul Revere's ride is recreated; major civic parades are held in Concord, Lexington, Arlington, and other towns; ceremonies take place at North Bridge; and the "battle" on Lexington Green is reenacted at dawn in front of an immense crowd.

Revolutionary War reenactors in eastern Massachusetts, particularly those who portray minutemen, get very little sleep on Patriots Day weekend. Their activities intersect with many other levels of commemoration. Most march in at least one civic parade, and some

town minutemen companies observe their own rituals as well. The Acton company, for instance, marches along the route taken by the Acton minutemen in 1775. The Sudbury Minutemen make a similar pre-dawn march to North Bridge, held devoutly on April 19 no matter what day of the week it falls on.

The primary reenactment of the weekend, known as "Battle Road," is actually made up of several segments in Concord, Lincoln, Lexington, and Arlington. These may occur on different days, depending on what else has been planned for the weekend. Although it occurred first historically, Lexington Green is usually recreated on the holiday Monday, as part of the town's Patriots Day celebrations. Other segments typically include a ceremonial version of the confrontation at Old North Bridge, staged battles on town land in Concord and Lexington, scripted "commemorative ceremonies" along the portions of Battle Road within Minute Man NHP, and a final battle reenactment (sometimes held on a different day) at the Jason Russell House in Arlington.

An important feature of the park segment of this event is that it is not park-sponsored, but held under a special use permit filed by reenactors. The park recognizes the weight of local tradition and visitor expectation around this event, and waives the usual permit fee despite the extremely high cost in staff hours.

Every 25 years, commemoration of the Lexington/Concord events becomes national in scope. New and existing organizations within the civic and historical communities in the area have been planning for the 225th anniversary in April 2000 for some time. (For example, see the web site for Lexington's Commission 2000 <www.2000lexington.com> which centers on the annual civic parade and the dawn reenactment on Lexington Green.)

Reenactor organization around the 225th anniversary began with a 1997 proposal from the then-coordinator of the northern department of the Continental Line, a national umbrella organization (see page 56). This proposal spurred discussion between the Continental Line and the Commanders' Roundtable about hosting a large-scale reenactor event on Patriots Day weekend in 2000. A new group, the Battle Road Committee, was formed to coordinate the project. The head of this committee, a long-time town minuteman member, is also deeply involved in planning Lexington's anniversary celebrations.

The Battle Road Committee identified two existing areas that they wanted to address before they felt the regional reenactor community could host an ambitious national event. First, the town minuteman companies had a long-standing claim to leadership and participation in Patriots Day activities, but their standards of safety and authenticity were very different from those of the avocational reenactors who made up the majority of the committee. Second, probably because of the town companies' central role in Patriots Day events, reenactor units portraying British soldiers had never been integral to the planning of Lexington/Concord events.

The second issue was easily handled by inviting representatives from British units to join the Battle Road Committee. The first, which has been more contentious, has involved a multi-year process of collaboration, education, and occasional coercion, during which

most of the town minuteman groups have made gradual changes in their clothing, accouterments, and drill, in order to meet the more exacting requirements of the Battle Road Committee. (See information at <www.ziplink.net/~mrkmcc/ resources.htm> or <www.ai.mit.edu/people/sfelshin/BRY2K> for copious information on these requirements and on the organization of the event.)

The committee has also worked very closely with Minute Man NHP to plan the 1997, 1998, and 1999 events. Discussion of that collaboration, and of the current state of planning for the 2000 event, will follow below.

Formation of Minute Man NHP

Minute Man National Historical Park was established in 1959, after a coalition of local, state, and federal groups sounded an alarm about the threat that Greater Boston's development posed for the historic landscape of Lexington, Concord, and the "Battle Road." This route, now known as Route 2A, connects the city with its affluent northwestern suburbs. By the 1950s it had become, and continues to be, a busy two-lane thoroughfare, closely connected with several major highways. Hanscom Field, a U.S. Air Force base, abuts the road in Concord, adding to the ground and air traffic in the area. A proposal to add commercial flights at Hanscom Field is currently creating renewed concerns about preservation and traffic.

The enabling legislation for Minute Man NHP created the 900-acre park as a way to offset encroaching development. Minute Man park, the legislation stated, would provide "for the preservation and interpretation of the historic sites, structures, and properties lying along the entire route…where significant events occurred on the 18th and 19th of April 1775" (*Minute Man Messenger* 1). The park is also charged with the preservation and interpretation of parts of Concord's nineteenth century literary past.

Like most historical parks, Minute Man is a compromise between preservationists' dreams and present-day realities. The park contains the property around Old North Bridge, which includes a Visitor Center and administrative offices. The bridge itself and the paths leading to it, however, are retained by the town of Concord to ensure free access for town commemoration at the site.

After a gap of two miles, the park begins again at Merriam's Corner, just outside Concord Center. A 5½ mile trail links Meriam's Corner with Fiske Hill in Lexington. A second Visitor Center was built in 1975 near the eastern end of the park. Other important sections of the historical landscape, notably Lexington Green, remain in other hands. This geographic fragmentation, and the commercial and residential development that continues throughout the area, make Minute Man a somewhat disjointed property, preserving isolated eighteenth and nineteenth century islands in the midst of a busy twentieth century sea.

An important and sometimes controversial focus at the park in the 1980s and 1990s has been the restoration of a portion of Battle Road within the park to its "1775 character"

(Linenthal 34). This ambitious plan resurfacing and landscaping the section of road in the park, rehabilitating several historic structures (such as the Hartwell Tavern), and gradually removing the most intrusive signs of the twentieth century. Because this project has absorbed a great deal of staff energy and time, as well as unsettling the physical landscape of the park over a period of several years, it has inevitably affected the park's focus on other special projects, such as the annual Battle Road events.

Even under normal conditions, Minute Man's geography and history create many special challenges for the planning of large-scale public events, especially those involving reenactors. Unlike most battlefield parks, Minute Man offers few open spaces or encampment sites. The battle took place on the run, along a narrow and wooded road. Sight lines are often poor, and potential viewing areas cramped. Parking is limited. Traffic along Route 2A can make it difficult to get in and out of the park. With no obvious central area that is easily accessible, visitors, park staff, and reenactors must all shuttle from one venue to the next during any commemoration of the Battle Road events. The result is a feeling of restriction and complexity that adds tension to an already-intricate and emotionally-charged event.

The park and area reenactors have made concerted efforts to find alternate ways to use "living history" in park interpretation. The park sponsors its own unit, Prescott's Battalion, which represents a local militia company and is made up of reenactors from many local units. This group and several other closely affiliated with the park appear frequently at the Visitor Centers and Hartwell Tavern, depicting drills, musters, town meetings, and other activities from the standard "living history" repertoire. Local reenactors are very much a presence in the park's interpretive programs: of the 30 special programs held at Minute Man in 1999, 21 involved Revolutionary War reenactors.

Reenactors associated with Minute Man NHP have also developed an innovative role known as the "picket." Created as a way of providing interpretation and crowd control during public events, this role makes use of reenactors who are not in the military ranks. The pickets stand at the rope line before and during scenarios, answering questions and explaining what is happening on thefield.

However, the strong ongoing relationship between Minute Man NHP and local reenactors is weakened by the inherent problems that arise around the annual Patriots Day events. The more "authentic" the environment at Minute Man becomes, the less tolerant reenactors seem to be of the patently unhistorical "ceremonies" that emerge from their compromises with NPS policy. Many seem to see the Battle Road event as a potential trade-off for the many hours they spend volunteering at Minute Man each year. The park's geography limits its options for hosting large reenactor presentations, and the story of the fight at North Bridge and the British retreat along Battle Road offers few scenarios that do not involve battle. And that story—especially during major anniversary years—resonates deeply with reenactors and the public, heightening the importance of Patriots Day commemorations. Maneuvering cautiously among all of these considerations,

Minute Man NHP and the Battle Road Committee are faced with the unenviable task of trying to create a unified public performance out of many contradictory pieces.

Battle Road 1999

➢ Planning and organization

As noted above, reenactor activities at Minute Man NHP are only one segment of a larger series of reenactments on Patriots Day weekend. Conversely, the reenactors are just one of many groups using the park for commemorative purposes around April 19. Both the park staff and the reenactor coordinators, then, are working within larger contexts as they plan the "Battle Road" event at the park.

For both groups, planning begins with a post-mortem of the previous year's event. The 1998 and 1999 events were part of the Battle Road Committee's extended preparation for the 225th anniversary. The committee decided to survey reenactors and visitors at the April 1998 event, and they used this data (which closely mirrored audience and reenactor data collected in this report) to plan for 1999. During the winter of 1998/99 they also reviewed questions of timing, transportation, scripting, etc., and sponsored workshops and lectures designed to help reenactors (particularly the town minuteman companies) raise their standards of authenticity.

Both the committee and the park recognized that the 1999 event would be a dress rehearsal for a much larger performance the following April. In January 1999, park staff and committee members met to talk about planned scenarios and to visit the three proposed sites: North Bridge, the "Bloody Angle" and Hartwell Tavern (a venue not previously used for this event), and a portion of Nelson Road and Trainor Field near the Minute Man Visitor Center. At this meeting, the reenactors' initial proposal was discussed and refined.

I attended a second walk-through in March 1999. Representatives from each of the 35 participating local units were invited, along with "picket" leaders and park staff. In retrospect, organizers felt there had been perhaps too many people at this meeting, and that resulting miscommunication may have contributed to misunderstandings during the event itself.

The March rehearsal lasted for several hours, and covered each of the sites (inside and outside the park) that would be used for the April performance. Specific details of timing, locations and angles for firing, and spectator viewing areas were discussed at each site within the park.

Both the park and the committee publicized the Battle Road events. In publicity materials, activities within the national park were clearly listed as "ceremonies," while those on other properties were described as "reenactments"—a distinction, as my audience surveys showed, that spectators did not always understand.

- **Event report**

I observed all of the reenactor activities at Minute Man NHP on Saturday, April 17, as well as two of the battle reenactments held on non-park land in Concord and Lexington.

The day began early, with NPS staff and reenactors meeting at Old North Bridge shortly after 6 a.m. The reenactors arrived on buses chartered by the Battle Road Committee. Early visitors began to stake out their positions at about 6:30 a.m., joined shortly by the pickets, who took up their positions along the rope lines.

One park ranger who frequently acts as a liaison with reenactor groups was present in a British uniform, enabling him to accompany the reenactors unobtrusively. Other interpretive rangers were on the site as well, including some from nearby national parks who were assisting with black-powder inspections and becoming familiar with the event in anticipation of next year's much larger Battle Road activities. The superintendent was also in attendance. The park's protection staff took the lead in coordinating activities within the park.

The many tensions of Patriots Day weekend—long days, complex schedules, heightened expectations, heavy traffic on narrow roads, unpredictable weather—were evident throughout the day. The program began at 7:30 a.m. with a brief fife and drum performance followed by a volley fired by the massed British troops at the foot of the bridge. This ceremonial volley was intended to represent the shots fired at the advancing colonials, who were then scheduled to return fire ceremonially from across the river. The British turned and retreated, some of them making quite a convincing show of being frightened.

However, there was no answering fire from across the bridge, and no apparent reason for the redcoats to have run away. Many spectators around me expressed amusement or confusion about the lapse. After several minutes, the colonial forces finally started across the bridge, to rousing applause from the audience. As a "ceremony," the scenario lacked any clear ceremonial intent; as a representation of what happened historically at North Bridge, it seemed illogical and static.

It turned out that there had been a disagreement between park rangers and the colonial forces on the other side of the bridge. There is still contention over the cause of the problem, suggesting that two different sets of expectations were operating. NPS staff believed the plan was being changed unexpectedly, while reenactors have stated that it was their understanding that the scenario would include "street firing," or firing while on the march. With the crowd waiting and the dispute unresolved, the reenactors ended up not firing as usual at the foot of the bridge, but just marching over the bridge to complete the scenario. The friction caused by this mix-up affected relations between the rangers and reenactors for the rest of the day, and has continued to be a source of disagreement in subsequent meetings between the park and the Battle Road Committee.

The second segment of the day was the Meriam's Corner reenactment, held on conservation land owned by the town of Concord. Park staff were on hand to observe and to oversee parking at the nearby NPS lot, but this part of the event was organized and run entirely by the reenactors. During the nearly hour-long wait before the battle reenactment started, the pickets spoke to visitors along the rope-line, and the fifes and drums of the 1st Michigan performed for the audience.

At 9:35 a.m., the action began at the north end of the field. Like most reenacted battles, this one took place at a fairly stately place, with little simulated urgency or fear. I counted about 300 reenactors on the field, with colonials slightly outnumbering British. Although there were "casualties," none remained on the ground by the time the battle had moved to the southern end of the field; they seemed to be surreptitiously rejoining their units as the scenario moved. As the colonial forces left the field, they gave three cheers, which the crowd responded to enthusiastically. This part of the event lasted just over half an hour.

There was a gap of about 90 minutes before the next scene, which took place at Hartwell Tavern in the restored section of the park. This was the scene that had not been tried before, and it proved to be the most problematic. The plan was for the reenactors to begin firing and marching in the woods at the "Bloody Angle," several hundred yards west of the tavern. The crowd, waiting in an enclosed field across from the tavern, was supposed to gain a sense of the approaching battle, followed by the sight of redcoats retreating quickly along the road, pursued by colonial militia in the woods.

The scene unfolded as planned, but it was extremely brief. Without a cohesive narrative to tell people what was happening, the hoped-for sense of urgency turned into mere confusion. Many people had waited for close to an hour for a scene that lasted only a few minutes; some unhappy visitors had been searching in vain for the earlier segments, and had finally located this one only to be badly disappointed by it. Again, the combination of "ceremonial" musket fire and a representation of battle maneuvers did not create a credible result. On the spot, park staff agreed that the Hartwell Tavern scenario needed to be rethought for the following year.

The final two segments within the park took place continguously along a stretch of road behind the Minute Man Visitor Center in Lincoln. There was another pause of about an hour while the reenactors ate lunch and visitors gathered at one end of the Nelson Road. The viewing area at this site was extremely restricted, and the scenario was again unsatisfying for spectators, who were able only to hear shots fired in the distance, and then to watch as the redcoats marched along the road and on to the next area.

At the final location, Trainor Field, a long row of British soldiers lined up to fire a volley in unison, while distant colonials could be seen crossing the field and climbing the bluff at the far eastern end of the park. Most of the reenactors boarded their buses shortly afterward (a few were marching the entire route on foot) and the park segments of the event were completed.

I finished my own day by viewing the "Concord Hill" reenactment, held at Hastings Park in the center of Lexington. This site offered excellent sight lines and access, but the modern setting, with nearby traffic, buildings, power lines, and a central gazebo were in striking contrast to the more atmospheric landscape within Minute Man park, illustrating the difficulty of finding settings that are both convenient and historically appropriate.

As before, the pickets were at the rope-lines to speak to spectators, and the massed field music played for some time before the battle scenario began. The reenactors performed the half-hour battle scenario at Hastings Park with great enthusiasm, in front of an audience larger than the ones gathered at previous sites. In this case, because spectators were much closer to the action, the "casualties" stayed on the ground until the end of the scenario, then stood and rejoined their units.

The reenactors boarded their buses at about 3 p.m., on their way to the last part of the Battle Road event, at Tower Park in Lexington. Many would participate the next day at a reenactment and parade in Arlington, followed by the dawn reenactment and a long parade in Lexington on Monday. At Minute Man park, a group of 1,500 boy scouts would arrive the next day after recreating the march of the Acton Minute Man. On Monday, half a dozen commemorative events were scheduled at the park, including a dawn cannon salute and the Concord town parade.

- **Audience survey**

The Battle Road event provided an unusual opportunity for me to speak with visitors. Unlike typical reenactor events, centered around an encampment with a varied schedule of events during the day, Battle Road offered enclosed viewing areas and distinct episodes of reenactor activity. Because people gathered well in advance of the reenactors' arrival, I was able to observe the crowd as a whole, and to talk to people before they actually saw the reenactor presentations.

I spoke with visitors before each of the three reenactor segments within the park:

18 individuals or groups at Old North Bridge
17 at Hartwell Tavern
14 at Nelson Road/Trainor Field

After each of the 49 brief in-person surveys I conducted, I asked if people would be willing to mail back a short follow-up questionnaire. 30 of my respondents (61%) did so. (See Appendix D for survey questions.)

My questions centered on visitors' expectations and experiences. As at the other parks I studied, I was interested in what had motivated people to come to the event, and in what they had enjoyed or found disappointing about it.

Number of people in party

1	21%
2	33%
3	10%
4	16%
5	8%
6 or more	12%

37% had been to Patriots Day events at Minute Man NHP before.

1 previous visit	33%
2-3 previous visits	28%
more than 3	28%
not sure	11%

25% of survey respondents knew some of the reenactors present.

Many people mentioned more than one reason why they had come to the Patriots Day activities. The following list includes the major reasons and the number of times they were mentioned:

Interest in history	20
Curiosity	13
Educational reasons	9
Accompanying reenactors, or interested in seeing reenactors	9
Children were interested	7
Beauty of area/good weather	5
Live nearby or always attend	3
To relive childhood memories	2
Touring the area	2

What part of the event are you most looking forward to?

Reenactor activities (musket firing, seeing soldiers in historic setting, music, costumes, etc.)	22
Battle/reenactment	19
A specific segment of Battle Road event (segments in park mentioned 4 times, outside park mentioned 9 times)	13
All of it	7

Not sure	5
Experiencing history	5
Enjoying the park or area	4
Commemorating an important event	1
Educational value	1
Visiting with friends or family	1

- **Follow-up surveys**

Which segments of the April 17 event did you attend?

North Bridge (MIMA)	14
Meriam's Corner (Concord)	14
Hartwell Tavern (MIMA)	17
Nelson Road (MIMA)	10
Trainor Field (MIMA)	4
Concord Hill (Lexington)	11
Tower Park (Lexington)	10

What part did you enjoy most?

Reenactor activities (music, marching, battle, musket firing, large number of reenactors, etc.)		23
Specific segment of event		17
	Hastings Park 8	
	Meriam's Corner 4	
	Tower Park 4	
	North Bridge 1	
Interpretation/explanation by NPS rangers or pickets		11
All of it		8
Being in park/on historic site		3

Was there any part that you found disappointing?

Sight lines obstructed by landscape or NPS staff	9
Wanted to see battles reenacted	7
Too long/too short (primarily at Hartwell Tavern)	7
"Ceremonies" unrealistic	5
Needed better maps/signs/directions/parking	4
Wanted more interpretation/context	3
Needed amplification for interpreters/pickets	2
Reenactors' acting was unrealistic	2
Wanted to see cannons fired	1
Wished Hartwell Tavern had been open	1
Meriam's Corner battle was dull	1

100% of respondents stated that the reenactors were an important part of their visit to Minute Man NHP.

73% felt that the reenactors presented a realistic depiction of the past. 27% felt that the reenactors' depiction had been "somewhat realistic."

Follow-up and planning for Battle Road 2000

Park personnel and the Battle Road Committee have held several follow-up meetings and discussions since April 1999. They agree that there are still important questions to be worked out before next year's planned large-scale event will be acceptable to both the park and the reenactors.

The handling of the misunderstanding during the Old North Bridge scenario has been of central concern to both groups. Battle Road Committee members have seen the problem as a clash between NPS interpretive and protection staff. At historical parks, they believe, interpretive staff should take the lead in managing historically-oriented events, particularly those involving reenactors. They see their own interests and approaches as being naturally aligned with those of interpretation, and are concerned that protection rangers see reenactors primarily as safety hazards rather than interpretive volunteers.

Park staff do not share this view of the situation, pointing to many points of cohesion between interpretive and protection personnel within the park, and to a shared sense of staff support for NPS policies and values. They do feel, however, that the April event revealed some lapses in communication between individuals, among park departments, and between the park and reenactor commanders. In particular, because of staff changes in the park, a new protection ranger was introduced and placed in control of the event at the March walk-through, leaving virtually no time for him to build up the kind of relationship of trust that seems to be essential for successful reenactor events at parks.

At a meeting I attended at Minute Man in early May, key park staff and members of the Battle Road Committee addressed these and other questions. People spoke quite frankly at this meeting, and exposed many of the underlying difficulties that parks and reenactors face in working together—difficulties that are often close to the surface with the Battle Road event. These issues included:

- the power of original battle sites to attract reenactors
- a sense that liaison groups like the Battle Road Committee greatly help park/reenactor relations by streamlining communications and building direct relationships between key reenactors and parks
- a recognition that reenactor motivation, park interpretation, and visitor satisfaction are often at odds with one another
- a sense among reenactors that they are not essentially trusted by the NPS
- the need to find logistical and performative solutions to problems (for example, establishing a central command post to facilitate communication for Battle Road)

- the persistence of reenactor belief that NPS black powder policies are primarily about safety, not values

Shortly after the May meeting, some in the regional reenactor community felt the park had not conceded enough, and that it was time to mount a more concerted lobbying effort to gain greater control of the Battle Road event. One reenactor posted a strongly-worded message on a Revolutionary War reenactment listserve, suggesting that reenactors should try to galvanize public support for their views on Park Service policy. Some in the reenactor community seemed ready to answer this call to arms, which drew heavily on the iconography of the minutemen, framing the struggle as one between freedom-loving individuals and an unresponsive federal government. Others, particularly on the Battle Road Committee, distanced themselves from the suggestion that they supported any public confrontation.

At the center of the planning process, particularly between the park superintendent and the chair of the committee, there remains a solid commitment to negotiation that has thus far kept the two sides at the table talking to one another. Whether it is possible to hold a large-scale event on an important battleground that will satisfy reenactors, visitors, and the park, is the question that Minute Man staff and the Battle Road Committee are still trying to answer.

Case Study B
The King's Own Patriots at Kings Mountain NMP
May 21-23, 1999

Introduction

The small-scale encampment at Kings Mountain NMP offered some insights into some different facets of reenactments at national parks, including:

- the use of reenactors as a basic way of attracting visitor attention, especially at a park whose history is not well-known
- the importance of park staff being able to communicate with reenactors in the often-playful idiom used by the reenactment community
- the many points of overlap between avocational reenactors and the field of historic preservation and interpretation
- other points of overlap between historic sites, reenactors, and commercial or mass media enterprises such as the History Channel

The Kings Mountain event also underscored some points already raised, such as:

- reenactors' role as traditional users of parks, continuing a long-standing tradition of historical performance at these sites
- the appeal of original historical sites for reenactors

- the fact that reenactors have become an extremely recognizable feature on the commemorative landscape, as shown by the fact that even casual or recreational visitors to Kings Mountain had encountered reenactors in other settings

The battle

Although they are little-known even in the region, several small-scale Revolutionary War battles in North and South Carolina had a significant impact on the war's outcome. The cluster of national parks in the Carolinas—Guilford Courthouse, Cowpens, Ninety-Six, Kings Mountain—preserve sites interpreted as crucial turning-points in the fight for American independence.

By the late 1770s, colonial and British armies had fought to a standstill in the north. Believing many southern colonists to be loyal to the crown, British commanders turned their attention south. By mid-1780 they had secured Georgia and most of South Carolina, and were planning to move north into populous Virginia. They recruited heavily as they went, raising a loyalist militia to counter the patriot militia in what had become truly a regional civil war.

This strategy began to fall apart in the fall of 1780. The British were unable to retain control of areas they no longer occupied, and the ferocity of some British soldiers and commanders—notably Banastre Tarleton and Patrick Ferguson—swayed many people to join the patriot side, if only for protection. When the headstrong Ferguson moved into the "back country" of the western Carolinas, attempting to subdue local populations with threats and demands, settlers on the frontier rallied to fight him.

A small army of about 1,000 militiamen assembled during a march through Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Ferguson pulled back to Kings Mountain, a forested hill at the edge of the Blue Ridge. His 1,100 men—themselves colonial militia, not British regulars—camped on what seemed to be a defensible position at the summit. But attacking patriot militiamen made good use of the wooded terrain to cover their advance, while the defenders were unable to see their enemies or to make use of their most effective weapon, the bayonet.

After an hour of heavy fighting, Ferguson was shot dead and his men discouraged and disoriented. Ignoring white flags of truce, the patriots continued to slaughter loyalists who were attempting to surrender, leaving 225 dead, 163 wounded, and 716 prisoners. The victors lost only 28 killed, 62 wounded. Bitter partisan feelings in the region came out in the harsh treatment of the Tory wounded, prisoners, and supporters in the area, giving an aspect of vigilantism to what was already an ugly neighbor-against-neighbor struggle.

Despite the social turmoil of the war in the Carolinas by this point, the battle of Kings Mountain had clear and immediate military results. The victory spurred recruitment for patriot militias throughout the region. General Cornwallis, shaken by the loss of

Ferguson, one of his most effective commanders, halted his planned advance into Virginia.

While he regrouped, the southern department of the Continental Army grew stronger under its new commander, Nathanael Greene. A series of costly and crucial engagements—at Cowpens in January 1781, Guilford Courthouse in March, and the siege of Ninety-Six later that spring—sapped British strength and resolve. Leaving the Carolinas unconquered, Cornwallis withdrew to Virginia in 1781, where Washington's army, reinforced by the French, forced a British surrender at Yorktown.

Commemoration at Kings Mountain

Like the New England minutemen, the "overmountain men" of the Carolinas backcountry have come to represent the natural courage and democratic impulses of the American citizen-soldier. "The phenomenon of Patriots spontaneously organizing under the leadership of militia colonels to track down Ferguson's force exemplified the self-sufficiency and emerging democracy of the American frontier," as the official Historic Resource Study for Kings Mountain NMP states (Blythe 31).

Commemoration at Kings Mountain has tended to center around this ideal of frontier democracy. The first marker was placed on the site in 1815, a very early example of public honor for American war dead. A centennial association bought a 38½-acre portion of the battlefield in 1880 and erected a monument on the summit of the mountain. A local DAR chapter took over custodianship of the site shortly afterward, and was responsible for the large granite obelisk raised in 1909 in memory of the patriot forces at Kings Mountain.

The sesquicentennial of the battle, in 1930, attracted an enormous crowd, including then-President Hoover. A pageant was staged, depicting dramatic and allegorical episodes based on the 1780 battle. During this time another battle was taking place, between those who believed the site should become a national military park and those who felt it was already sufficiently memorialized. In 1931, supporters of the park were successful, and Kings Mountain National Military Park was established under the jurisdiction of the War Department. The property was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933 (Blythe 60-63).

An important feature of this national park is that federal and state governments originally envisioned it as part of a 10,000 recreation area. Between 1937 and 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps worked under NPS direction to develop the property as public parkland. 6,000 acres were deeded to South Carolina in 1940 as a state park, while 4,000 acres remained in the national military park.

The relative obscurity of the Kings Mountain battle, and the enticements of both the federal and state parks, mean that a large number of visitors to Kings Mountain are there as hikers, bikers, or campers, rather than as historical pilgrims. Unlike Minute Man NHP, Kings Mountain's function is as much recreational as historical. Moreover, it is

deep in Civil War territory. Interpretive staff—and reenactors—often find themselves imparting what one reenactor referred to as "remedial history," educating visitors about the bare outlines of the Revolutionary War in the south.

Local residents made regular use of the park for commemorative purposes after 1931, often staging historical pageants and other community events in the park's amphitheater and grounds. The Kings Mountain Little Theater regularly produced pageants there through the 1950s and 1960s, a tradition that concluded with a final performance during the national bicentennial.

As at Lexington and Concord, a newer form of historical performance was already emerging as the pageant tradition faded. In 1975, as part of local bicentennial celebrations, a group of residents decided to recreate the 220-mile march of the patriot militiamen who had mustered to fight Ferguson's forces. This march has become an annual event, and was the impetus for the 1980 designation of the route as a national historic trail, the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Starting on September 23 each year, marchers spend some or all of a two-week period walking and/or driving south to Kings Mountain, where they participate in ceremonies at the amphitheater and U.S. monument. Most wear period dress, and perform "skits" for spectators along the route, acting out debates that might have occurred among the original marchers.

Some members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association are also avocational reenactors as well. The Company of Overmountain Men, a local reenactor unit, participates in the annual march, and also encamps at the park in August during the Kings Mountain Forum, an event started in 1998 and featuring academic presentations and living history displays.

Kings Mountain NMP did not include avocational reenactors in its interpretive programs until after the bicentennial years had ended. In the early 1980s, staff budget cuts and the arrival of a VIP who was also a reenactor prompted the park to begin building a working relationship with one or two reenactor groups in the area. The current Acting Superintendent, who is also the park's black powder safety officer, sees reenactors as a way to attract visitor attention and to begin interpreting some of the complexity of the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas.

The park currently has good relationships with six to eight reenactor units in the area, and hosts several events involving reenactors each year. Most, like the one described below, are small-scale weekend encampments.

The King's Own Patriots

This somewhat unusual group of reenactors portrays a loyalist militia unit from the Carolinas. Their paradoxical title (they are also sometimes known as the North Carolina

Volunteers and as the Hillsborough District Militia) suggests that they are trying to engage some of the subtler layers of the American Revolutionary War story.

The group was founded in 1997 by two museum professionals who began reenacting recreationally during the national bicentennial. Both were dissatisfied with their current units, and shared a desire to interpret the loyalist militia experience in the south, what one of them called as "messy, ambivalent, non-linear" aspect of the war that they felt had not yet been portrayed well in reenactment.

With about 16 current members (13 men, 3 women), the group is still establishing its own style and finding its place in the southern Revolutionary War reenactment community. Although the North Carolina-based unit portrays southerners, most of its key members are natives of the north or midwest. It has recently joined the Brigade of the American Revolution, and its commander now heads the BAR's new southern department.

Arrangements for the May encampment were very simple. Other reenactors who appear regularly at Kings Mountain and other national parks in the region suggested to the King's Own Patriots' commander that the park was a venue worth considering for a living history encampment. The commander contacted the Acting Superintendent, and they discussed dates and possible locations for the camp and demonstrations. Although units usually camp on the lawn behind the Visitor Center, the May encampment was set up in a clearing in the woods about 100 yards from the building. Members of the unit had worked with several other national parks, and were familiar with NPS black powder rules.

More than this, the unit's membership includes a very high proportion of people with experience in museums and preservation work. The commander is trained in history museum administration and is currently Chief Curator at the North Carolina Museum of History. His wife, who makes much of the unit's clothing, is also trained as a museum curator and has worked at Sturbridge Village and elsewhere; she is now a consultant in historical textiles and works in the Architectural History and Preservation Section for the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The group's co-founder was trained in history and archaeology and worked in museums in North Carolina until he was offered work sculpting military miniatures, which he describes as "doing my hobby for my living." Of the remaining four group members at Kings Mountain, one is an architectural restoration contractor, another a skilled artisan who is considering going into museum work. Some other unit members not at the May encampment are employed at Colonial Williamsburg and other regional historic sites.

Even for the Revolutionary War reenactment community, which contains many places of overlap with historical professions, the King's Own Patriots are extraordinarily knowledgeable about the field of historical interpretation. This group, then, offered an unusual opportunity for me to speak with people who crossed the line between avocational reenactment and professional interpretation. Because this was such a small event, I was able to interview each unit member inidividually. Some of the ideas that emerged from these conversations are listed below:

- Reenactors need to work with historical parks and museums to find living history scenarios that are appealing and challenging for all concerned. If reenactors want to have access to important original sites, they must work with the custodians of those sites to make living history a useful interpretive tool, rather than a stale set of conventions.

- Some kind of narration is crucial to effective living history presentations.

- These reenactors had unusual insight into parks' and museums' desire for accountability from volunteer interpreters. One unit member suggested that a way to attract accountable reenactors would be for historical sites (perhaps a regional cluster of national parks) to invest materially in reenactor groups (for example, providing equipment or resources that would be beyond reenactors' usual reach, which could be sold to the reenactors at a reduced cost after an agreed-upon length of time). Paying at least a small fee to effective reenactor groups is another way of achieving accountability and reciprocity.

- Parks and museums need to identify ways (perhaps hiring someone to research and script scenarios) to develop and maintain living history standards that are in harmony with the site's interpretive theme and landscape.

- Revolutionary War reenactors could do more to recruit African-American members, to create a more accurate and diverse portrayal of the armies on both sides of the struggle.

Event report

The Kings Mountain encampment followed the shape of most reenactment events. The unit set up its camp on Friday evening, performed for the public all day on Saturday and most of the day on Sunday, then broke camp and left for home late Sunday afternoon. I visited with the reenactors shortly after they arrived on Friday, observed and interviewed them on Saturday and Sunday, and left shortly before they did on Sunday afternoon. I also spoke with the Acting Superintendent, viewed the orientation film in the Visitor Center, and conducted brief audience interviews among visitors to the encampment on both days.

As at many reenactor events, each day was organized around drilling, firing demonstrations, and mealtimes. The firing demonstrations followed a typical pattern: the unit commander gave commands to the men and also interpreted what they were doing for the spectators. (These were groups of from 8 to 42 people, with an average of 18. Park attendance for the weekend was 600-700 a day, a fairly typical turnout for the time of year.)

The Acting Superintendent commented to me that while the typical firing demonstration is not very interesting to those who have seen it once or twice, musket firing is always a way to get people's attention. It provides a definite activity that people will gravitate toward, and makes enough noise that it cannot be ignored. Once visitors' attention has been caught, they often stay to learn about other, more complex issues.

The reenactors brought up some of those issues during their interpretation over the course of the weekend, but the majority of what they said during demonstrations was about weapons and tactics. At some demonstrations the unit leader did also talk about who they represented, and what might have motivated a South Carolinian colonist to take up arms for the king. Many people seemed intrigued by this, and by the red ribbon the reenactors wore in their hats to mark them as loyalists.

At the weapons inspection on Saturday morning, the Acting Superintendent pointed out that one reenactor's musket barrel was dirty and needed to be cleaned. After noting the problem, however, he added sadly that he supposed you couldn't expect much from militia. The reenactors immediately picked up on this comment, taking it in the spirit of historical joking that they use among themselves much of the time.

Some unit members mentioned afterward that they had recently attended an NPS event where the black powder safety officer had handled a similar situation in a much more heavy-handed manner, which had left some bad feeling among the reenactors. The Kings Mountain incident, on the other hand, illustrated how park staff can share some of reenactors' improvisational approach to historical performance while remaining very attentive to NPS safety regulations. This use of humor is more than just a matter of personal style. It is a way of entering into reenactors' own often-playful idiom, and of seeing them as part of a shared enterprise—with a shared concern for safety and authenticity—rather than as a potentially-dangerous outside group.

While the men drilled and fired, the commander's wife cooked and sewed. This was a great attraction for many visitors of both sexes. During some firing demonstrations, as many people stayed around the cook fire to talk as went to watch the firing. Many of the male reenactors in this unit also sew, and they spent a good part of the weekend working on new clothes for themselves, an object of some curiosity to visitors.

During the afternoon on Saturday, the male reenactors marched to the top of Kings Mountain to look at the battlefield and do some firing demonstrations at the summit. Most were unfamiliar with the battle, although some had been learning about it recently. Like most reenactors, the King's Own Patriots are excited about learning, and I had the sense that the opportunity to become acquainted with a battle's history on the original ground was extremely appealing to them.

At the U.S. monument, they stopped to talk to a large group of Boy Scouts, then progressed to the centennial monument at the summit. Here they re-encountered a very knowledgeable visitor who had spent quite a lot of time earlier talking with them in their

camp. Ever recruiting, they furnished him with one of their hats and did their best to enlist him, to no avail.

Because there were few other visitors on the mountain top, they spent their time practicing their own drill, resting in the shade, and discussing ideas for possible future events at the park. With more unit members present, they felt they could have two small encampments, one representing patriots at the foot of the mountain, and the other representing loyalists at the top. With their generic civilian clothing, the group can easily portray either side. This, they thought, might help visitors to understand how similar the two sides really were, and how bitter the divisions in the Carolinas were during the Revolution.

Late on Sunday morning, the camp was visited by park staff and by a producer from the History Channel, who had been filming for a series on "battles of the frontier" during the Revolution. Park staff saw this as a good way to publicize the little-known events at Kings Mountain. Reenactors hoped to impress the producer with their knowledge and authenticity; work as film and television extras has become an important source of income for many reenactor groups. The producer, a former reenactor himself, told me that he recruits reenactors based on "body language and attitude," meaning that he looks for people who appear natural and comfortable in their presentation.

At the end of the weekend, members of the King's Own Patriots seemed to judge the weekend a success. They had spent two beautiful spring nights in a nearly-pristine historical environment, explored a new battlefield, made a connection with a new national park and a television producer, and had a chance to drill, talk with visitors, and socialize with one another.

Audience surveys

Talking with visitors at Kings Mountain was somewhat problematic because of the arrangement of the reenactor camp. Not everyone followed the path that passed by the encampment, and not all who did noticed that the reenactors were there, or chose to stop. Rather than speaking with people before they encountered the reenactors, I found that I had to catch them just before and just after firing demonstrations.

Because these crowds formed and dispersed quickly, and were generally small, I was not able to complete as many audience surveys as I had planned at Kings Mountain. I spoke with 24 individuals or groups, of whom 14 (58%) returned the follow-up survey to me in the mail.

Although the number of respondents was small, their responses were quite consistent.

- 75% had been to Kings Mountain before.
- 75% of repeat visitors had been to the park three or more times.

Unlike Minute Man NHP, where the majority of visitors cited history-related reasons for visiting, most Kings Mountain visitors were there for recreation. Their reasons and number of times each was mentioned were:

Hiking/camping/scouting/biking	11
To check out the park	4
Looking for something to do	3
Interested in Revolutionary War history	2
Interested in reenactors/living history	2
Educating children	2
Volunteering in park	1
Visiting family/friends	1

Only a few people (17%) knew in advance that there would be Revolutionary War reenactors at the park that day. None were acquainted with any of the King's Own Patriots.

However, 83% had seen reenactors in other settings. Two respondents (the park volunteer and the Boy Scout leader) were reenactors themselves. Nine mentioned seeing reenactors at other national parks; ten cited other historical sites; two had seen reenactors outside the U.S.

Of the 14 people who returned the follow-up survey, all but one had spoken with the reenactors at the encampment. Asked what demonstrations or activities they had seen, they responded:

Firing demonstration	8
Camp life	7
Cooking	4
Marching/drill	4
Sewing	2
Uniforms	2
Reenactors socializing	1
Reenactor repairing gun	1

Asked what they had enjoyed the most, they listed:

Musket firing	5
All of it	4
Interpretation/explanation	3
Camp life	1
Learning about women's history	1
Realism of presentation	1

Perhaps because they came with fewer expectations, these visitors were not nearly as critical of the event as visitors to Minute Man NHP. The only visitor to express

disappointment was one woman who was sorry she hadn't been able to stay longer. Despite the fact that most had not known in advance that the encampment would be there, 79% said the reenactors were an important part of their visit to the park. 100% felt the King's Own Patriots had presented a realistic picture of the past.

Case Study C
Garrison weekend with units of the Continental Line at Saratoga NHP
June 18-20, 1999

Introduction

Many of the central points of this study are illustrated by the garrison event at Saratoga National Historical Park:

- Past forms of commemoration at Saratoga show that the tension between spectacle and solemnity, education and entertainment, is not new or unique to the current park/reenactor relationship. Saratoga's commemorative history also shows a longstanding tradition of community members presenting historical performances at sites associated with the battle.
- The growing relationship between Saratoga NHP and the Continental Line shows the increasing influence of reenactor umbrella organizations, rather than individual units, in organizing reenactor events. The many problems at a major 1997 encampment at the park, which did not work within any of the umbrella structures, underscores the point that the umbrella organizations are the best equipped groups to plan and run large reenactments.
- The 1997 event used non-NPS land for battle reenactments, but was unpopular nonetheless because of logistical problems. In looking for alternatives to holding battles at national parks, organizers need to take a broader view of what makes an event successful for reenactors: careful planning, opportunities to socialize, etc. In other words, battles are not the only thing that reenactors look for in an event.
- Like Minute Man NHP, Saratoga and its affiliated units seem to take the necessary long-term view of relationship-building, rather than dealing with one another just on an event-by-event basis. The park treats reenactors as a valued and integral part of its volunteer program, creating a strong sense of connection and identification with the park.
- Saratoga staff are unusually clear in explaining NPS policies to both visitors and reenactors. These explanations directly address questions of both **values** and **performance**. Perhaps because of this, there seems to be less friction than at other parks over the no-opposing-forces rules..
- The park provides many amenities that make reenactors feel welcomed and valued. Some of these are quite small, but nonetheless noted by reenactors.
- The participants at the Saratoga weekend illustrated the whole range of the park/reenactor continuum, including long-time park volunteers, second-generation reenactors and park volunteers, a park reenactor unit made up of

regular and seasonal rangers, some of whom were also avocational reenactors, educators, etc.

- Interpretation at Saratoga illustrates the ways in which parks use many of the same interpretive tools as reenactors, including those that create an entertaining or light-hearted atmosphere. While this does not extend to battle reenactment in the parks' case, it is important to note that this is a difference of degree, not of kind.

The battle

Like Lexington and Concord, Saratoga has come to represent the strength of American ideals and fighting skills early in the Revolution. Like Kings Mountain and other late-war battles in the south, it is interpreted as one of the crucial turning points in the war.

The strategic importance of the Hudson River created the setting for a signficant battle. British general John Burgoyne recognized that the river valley offered a direct route from British strongholds in Canada into the rebellious American colonies. He made this the basis for his 1777 campaign, intending to seize the area around Lake Champlain, then join other British forces in an effort to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies.

Burgoyne's plan faltered when other British commanders failed to join his army. Proceeding south anyway with 9,000 men, he was cut off from safety and supplies in Canada, and constrained by the narrow river valley he was following. Just north of the village of Stillwater, he encountered an equal force of Americans commanded by Horatio Gates, who had also recognized the strategic advantages of the Hudson River Valley. With the help of Polish engineer Thaddeus Kosciuskzko, the Continentals had entrenched themselves on a hillside above one of the valley's narrowest spots, where the British troops would have to squeeze between the hills and the river.

Rather than run the risk of destruction, Burgoyne chose to attack. On September 19, a vicious three-hour battle left the British in command of the field but badly battered, with the colonials still well-fortified and with open lines to the south. Burgoyne set his army to building entrenchments of their own, and dug in to wait for reinforcements he believed were on their way from New York City.

After almost three weeks, no reinforcements had come, while the Americans were welcoming new recruits into their ranks every day. Deciding to force a second battle, Burgoyne launched an attack that began another fierce fight. Within an hour his men were in retreat back to their fortifications, pressed by three columns of Americans. The Continentals' furthest advance was recklessly led by Benedict Arnold, who was badly wounded in the final assault on one of the British barricades.

At the end of the day, the British continued to withdraw under cover of darkness. Ten days later they were surrounded at Saratoga by an American army now numbering 20,000. Burgoyne surrendered his remaining 6,000 men to this overwhelming force. With the colonists in control of Boston, this surrender effectively ended British military

power in New England, and further damaged the notion that the formidable redcoats could not be beaten in a face-to-face battle.

Commemoration at Saratoga

Despite Saratoga's symbolic importance as the "turning point" of the American Revolution, its relative distance from large centers of population has meant that commemoration there has always tended to be local or regional, rather than national in scope. As at other sites, celebrations at Saratoga have often included—sometimes on a spectacular scale—performed representations of history.

The Saratoga battlefield remained in private hands for 150 years after the battle, but the events of the autumn of 1777—particularly Burgoyne's surrender—were well-remembered in nearby towns. The national centennial was the impetus for local civic and historical groups to break ground for a monument, located just north of the battlefield in Schuylerville, New York. The cornerstone-laying ceremony in October 1877 concluded with a "brilliant military spectacle, representing the Surrender of Burgoyne's Army" (Quinn 386).

Participants in this spectacle included many Civil War veterans and members of local militia units, who camped overnight and took part in sunrise salutes and a march to the battlefield. The attending crowd was estimated at between 40,000 and 100,000. Although I was unable to locate details about the "brilliant military spectacle," it seems probable that it was similar to other regional centennial presentations, such as the July 4, 1876 event at Rome, New York, which included an artillery-studded "representation of Fort Stanwix in the fierce contest of war" (*Rome Daily Sentinel*, July 1876).

The Saratoga monument was finally completed and dedicated in 1912, in a much more modest ceremony led by local Masons. Although the celebration included "an impressive array of military companies" (Quinn 104), there is no record that these uniformed men staged any type of battle reenactment. The difference between the centennial fanfare and the dedication 35 years later illustrates two very different approaches to commemoration, the solemn and the sensational, and confirms that during major anniversary years there tends to be public pressure for the latter type.

During the 1920s there was local agitation to have the Saratoga battlefield declared a public park. Local politicians and civic groups led a successful campaign that saw a state appropriation of $140,000 in 1926 for the purchase and restoration of the battlefield.

1926 also marked the start of the national sesquicentennial, giving Saratoga two reasons to celebrate. During the week of July 4, 1926, local towns joined in a display of pageantry depicting colonial times, with a focus on the signing of the Declaration of Independence and Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. The town of Schuylerville was transformed into "a replica of colonial days, with its dress, manner, and customs" (1926

program book, 151), with a final pageant staged by many local groups (including the Masons, who presented the military scenes).

Saratoga's sesquicentennial celebration provides an outstanding example of a civic pageant held at the height of the pageant movement in the U.S. Throughout New York state, towns and historic sites were embracing the ideals of pageantry: mass participation, education, and celebration of a common history grounded in local landscapes and events. In a 1927 newspaper article explaining why the majority of the state-sponsored sesquicentennial events featured pageants, state historian Alexander Flick pointed out three major benefits of pageantry:

1) Pageants encouraged participation by people of all ages.
2) Pageantry helped people to become more discerning about what was important and what was merely trivial in their local histories.
3) It created a "vivid realistic drama" that left "indelible impressions" on both participants and spectators.

Organizers at Saratoga hired Percy Jewett Burrell, a professional pageant-master, to direct the sesquicentennial pageant. Scripted by Josephine Wickster of Buffalo, the performance featured 6,200 performers, including a chorus of 1,000 singers and 1,200 National Guards from Albany. The "stage" was the Great Ravine of the newly-created Saratoga Battlefield Park.

The directors and their staffs communicated by specially-run telephone lines and signal corps. There was also a loudspeaker, but this was used only for announcements between scenes, not for interpretation. The script was divided into six "epochs" comprising 18 scenes, and focused on the declaration of American independence in 1776 and the events around Saratoga in 1777.

Although the actual battle of Saratoga was just one of these scenes (and by no means the longest, lasting only about 20 minutes), it captured much of the audience and media attention, just as reenacted battles do today. A few performers carried antique flintlocks to give an air of authenticity, but the actual firing was done by costumed men with modern rifles, who seemed to feel the same heightened emotions that contemporary reenactors often experience in "battle." A newspaper reporter noted that "Their instructions were to go through the motions of loading flint-locks before each shot. At first this was the custom, but as the action grew a little warmer the firing speeded up."

There were a few mix-ups among the several hundred "soldiers" in the scene, as when the British officers' horses became spooked by the gunfire and had to be led off by experienced Continentals, giving the impression that Burgoyne and his entire staff had been captured in mid-battle. And after the battle, the same reporter wrote:

> *…both sides began to pick up their 'dead' and 'wounded,' who lay here and there about the battlefield. The dead and wounded failed to do their full duty. Many who were marked for the casualty lists forgot their parts*

and there were comparatively few to be carried off the battlefield.

It is interesting to note that there was no artificial "raising of the dead," a technique that troubles many critics of contemporary reenactment. Newspaper photos of the scene show images that might almost have been taken in 1977 or 1997, except for the anachronistic rifles, cartridge belts, and smokeless powder. "The battle flowed on at a smart pace," the reporter wrote, "and without a serious hitch."

The pageant attracted an enormous crowd, estimated at between 100,000 and 150,000. Organizers deemed the event a great success, largely because it had raised Saratoga's profile in the region and even nationally. And the mass participation by area residents demonstrates a fact that remains true today—that the Saratoga battlefield is of tremendous importance in local commemorative activity. (This support was expressed strongly in 1995, when Saratoga was on the Department of the Interior's list of national parks slated for possible closing.)

Costumed performance continued to be a feature of local commemoration, although not on such a grand scale as the 1927 pageant. In 1938, the park was brought into the national park system. The transfer caused some resentment among local residents, particularly when the NPS moved an inauthentic but much-loved blockhouse that had been built on the battlefield in 1927, and which symbolized Saratoga for many people.

The shift toward more "authentic" and less colloquial commemoration continued at the park, although parades and other types of performances were still a part of annual local celebrations. In 1950, a historical parade represented the Saratoga battle symbolically with 13 girls as the 13 original states, escorted by World War II veterans. In 1973, a short program celebrating "Monument Day" included a demonstration of eighteenth century military drill. The bicenntenial commemoration was muted, with Tom Brokaw featured as a guest speaker and a small number of local reenactors in attendance.

Costumed interpretation within the park was concentrated within the park unit, the 2nd New Hampshire, and until recently the park had few connections with external reenactor groups. However, the present Chief of Interpretation sees reenactors as an important part of the park's volunteer program. During the first five years of her tenure at Saratoga, volunteer hours have increased from 800 to 13,000 per year, many of these contributed by reenactors. The park currently enjoys good relationships with a number of avocational reenactor groups, and is actively building a connection with the Continental Line, a national umbrella organization.

Two years ago, for the 220th anniversary of the battle, several local groups (including reenactor units) promoted the idea of a major commemorative event at the park. A special use permit was issued to a local historical association, and a coalition of area reenactment groups organized what became known as "Turning Point '77."

Although about 5,000 spectators and 400-500 reenactors attended this event, it was not generally judged a success by reenactors or by the park. One area reenactor described it

as "too diffused" in terms of leadership, logistics, and geography. The organizing groups were inexperienced at fundraising and at hosting large encampments, and the physical layout—British and American camps far apart, with the "battle" held on privately-owned land outside the park—worked against the kind of socializing that is important to reenactors. Poor weather and difficulties with transportation added to everyone's frustrations.

"Turning Point '77" was envisioned as a region-wide celebration that would include towns, reenactors, and the park, but the necessary coordination and partnerships were not in place to make this happen. Partly because of their experiences in 1987, Saratoga NHP and regional reenactor groups seem to recognize that any major event, such as the projected 225th anniversary encampment, must be based on solid relationships among experienced community groups.

Event report

- **Planning**

The June encampment with units of the Continental Line had its beginnings more than three years ago, when Saratoga's Chief of Interpretation visited a Continental Line event in eastern Massachusetts. She had heard about the umbrella organization through staff at Minute Man NHP, and was interested in the possibility of working with them at Saratoga.

The then-coordinator for the Continental Line's northern department is also a member of the Battle Road Committee. Like some of the other leaders at the Saratoga event, he is what I have termed a "third-generation" reenactor—those who came of age after the "baby boom" and Vietnam era, and who tend to reenact perhaps less as a way to fulfill frustrated dreams of soldiering, and more as a means of creating community or acquiring and sharing knowledge.

Like many reenactors in this generation, this man grew up in "the hobby." His father was a park volunteer at Minute Man, and is still an active reenactor. His fiancée's family has volunteered and organized special events at Saratoga NHP and other area historic sites for many years. He was active in the spring 1999 gun law lobby in Massachusetts, and has also helped to plan and run recent major Revolutionary War reenactor events sponsored by Parks Canada, giving him a broad perspective on many facets of reenactment.

Already looking toward a 225th anniversary event at Saratoga in 2002, some within the Continental Line expressed interest in the idea of holding an event there so that they and park staff could assess each other's styles. Because of the NPS rules prohibiting opposing forces, the event was set up as a garrison weekend, a scenario made plausible by the extended period of time that both the British and Continental armies remained encamped at Saratoga.

Normally, Saratoga encampments are set up on the flat lawn around the Neilson House, a reconstructed farmhouse that was within the American lines in 1777. For the June event, the reenactors requested that the park mow and make available a section of field below the house. The firing demonstrations, drill competition, and most of the group interpretation took place at the Neilson House. In the camp itself, reenactors offered more informal one-on-one interaction with visitors. Most visitors seemed to stop at both the camp and the Neilson House.

The change in location of the encampment prompted some discussion among park staff about how visitor-friendly the garrison weekend was likely to be. Some worried that the reenactors were coming to Saratoga primarily to pursue their own activities, rather than to enhance the park's interpretive mission. Others felt it was possible to satisfy both reenactors and visitors. These questions were raised with the event organizer, who put together a schedule addressing the needs of both visitors and reenactors. The park publicized the event widely, and my audience surveys showed that many people did come to the park primarily to see the reenactors, and that they enjoyed what they saw.

The planning process for the event included :

- telephone and email contact beginning in the fall of 1998
- meetings between park staff and reenactor organizers in December 1998 and June 1999
- a final schedule of events submitted to the park in late May

- **Weekend activities**

About 80 reenactors attended the garrison weekend. The event followed the usual weekend pattern, with the camps open to the public from nine to five on Saturday and nine to 3:30 on Sunday. The program listed various activities that were scheduled to take place throughout the day, but in practice the reenactors did not follow this schedule, which tended to develop as the days progressed. In place of the scheduled "Guided Tours of Camp," for instance, visitors were encouraged to walk through the camp on their own and to ask questions as they did so. Battalion drills and Sunday's drill competition also took place at different times from those listed. Some visitors expressed confusion about this, while others seemed satisfied just to observe whatever was going on at the moment. Park staff have noted this as an aspect of future encampments that needs to be addressed.

The featured activity on Sunday was the Strawberry Banke Bowl Drill Competition. This is an evolving tradition in the Continental Line's northern department, started when the Strawberry Banke museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, donated a silver bowl as a prize for the Line's first drill competition in 1994. This year's competition lasted for almost two hours, with each unit performing in three categories (drilling in line, marching, and musket firing).

There was almost no interpretation of this contest, and visitors seemed to become bored or puzzled by it after a short time. Spectators came and went, leaving about 30 people in the crowd at any given time. The largest crowd gathered at the end, to hear the judges' decision. There was an interesting period of time when all the reenactors and most of the visitors were mingled together on the lawn of the Neilson House. The lines between performers and spectators were momentarily dissolved, as both became caught up in waiting for the results of the competition. A very social atmosphere was created, lacking the usual restraints that many visitors feel in the presence of people who seem strangely suspended between past and present, onstage and offstage.

This convivial atmosphere shifted when park rangers stepped in to stage a mock drill with some children from the crowd. Using wooden guns, they showed a group of eight "recruits" how to hold and fire their "muskets." The mock drill was very light-hearted, amusing the crowd while instructing and entertaining the children. Although this was understandable as a technique for capturing the attention of young visitors and their parents, it seemed extremely similar to the playful spirit that pervades reenactment, which NPS policy-makers find so troubling when it comes to the depiction of battle. While a musket drill is not a battle, it is not an entirely unrelated activity, illustrating the extent to which NPS and reenactor interpretation—though they differ in the matter of battle—often make use of the same strategies and styles.

Each of the five units attending the garrison event took turns presenting musket firing demonstrations for visitors at the Neilson House over the course of the weekend. At these small-scale demonstrations, interpretation was done by members of the units, rather than by park rangers. All of the uniformed reenactors gathered for a 25-minute "Grand Division Drill" on Saturday afternoon, for which the black powder safety officer provided interpretation.

On Sunday morning, some of the women reenactors led an informal workshop on "Talking to Visitors," covering such topics as "The Importance of Interaction," how to draw in children as a way of getting adults involved, and how to develop a repertoire of questions to start people thinking about what they were seeing. This workshop included some practice at role-playing interactions with visitors, and an open discussion on interpretive strategies that had worked well for participants in the past.

- **Park reenactors: The 2nd New Hampshire**

A parallel type of reenactment was taking place in the park during the garrison weekend. Saratoga NHP has its own unit, the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment, founded at the park during the 1970s and made up of regular and seasonal rangers. The park's black powder safety officer, himself a former reenactor, provides leadership in this unit. The other members tend to be students or, in the case of the seasonal rangers, reenactors from other units.

During the garrison weekend, the 2nd New Hampshire set up a tent fly and cook fire behind the Neilson House, but did not camp there overnight. Their interpretive activities

dovetailed with the reenactors' in many ways. Rangers interpreted some of the reenactor activities for visitors, and acted as general interpreters throughout the weekend.

A noteworthy feature of the 2nd New Hampshire's interpretation is that it directly addressed the question of why reenactors may not portray battles on NPS land. Explaining this point to visitors, the black powder safety officer spoke in terms of both **values** and **performance**:

- First, he pointed out that recreated battles can never really show what actual combat is like. In his words, "It can't be anything more than an approximation. And for the people who were really here, this was not a weekend of fun." The discrepancy between the real thing and any reenactment of it, then, is so wide, in the Park Service's view, that it cannot be bridged.

- This ranger also echoed the view that activities deeply satisfying for reenactors, such as battle reenactments, may be unsatisfying for visitors. "Battles are *for* reenactors," he stated, adding that visitors can seldom effectively see or understand what is happening on the field during a reenacted battle. More than that, he feels that some visitors become caught up in a kind of "cartoon violence" that does an injustice to the memory of the actual events.

During his interpretation of the reenactors' battalion drills, this ranger clarified these two points repeatedly. Despite this clarification, some visitors at Saratoga still seemed disappointed that they were not seeing recreated battles. Staff at Minute Man speculated to me whether they could do more to explain Park Service policies to visitors at reenactor events, but my audience surveys at Saratoga suggest that a visitor who is hoping and expecting to see a battle may not be easily convinced by the rationale for the no-opposing-lines policy.

Saratoga's black powder officer nonetheless has excellent rapport with reenactors, having worked with them at more than one Revolutionary War park besides having been a reenactor himself. This seems to illustrate the point that if park staff are respected and liked by reenactors, NPS policies become much less of a bone of contention between them.

A second illustration of this at Saratoga involves the park's Chief of Interpretation. Many of the reenactors at the June weekend had also been at the 1999 Battle Road event, and subscribed very strongly to the idea that interpretive staff, particularly those with backgrounds in history, are by far the best equipped to understand and work with reenactors in parks. Beyond the perceived interpretive/protection split, I heard many reenactors at Saratoga and elsewhere complain that park staff at Revolutionary War parks were often career bureaucrats trained in a variety of fields, who were sometimes more intent on climbing a career ladder with the NPS than fostering the history that reenactors hold so dear.

At Saratoga, though, the Chief of Interpretation is by training a biologist who is still quite new to historical interpretation. But no one seems to mind this fact, because she is well-liked by reenactors and considered very respectful and welcoming to them. Personality seems to count for at least as much as policy in reenactors' eyes. As one member of the King's Own Patriots put it during my visit to Kings Mountain, **"Manner matters."** The relationships between Saratoga's staff and reenactors seems to prove the truth of this comment.

- **Attending units**

The units who attended the Saratoga weekend illustrated the growing maturity of the reenactment community, and its many significant points of connection with the National Park Service.

The 2nd Massachusetts Regiment, for instance, is commanded by a man whose father was an influential bicentennial-era reenactor and a "founding father" of the Continental Line. Like the organizer for the Saratoga event, this reenactor is young but extremely experience at running reenactor events. In addition, he is a former Eastern National employee who has worked closely with many national parks in both the U.S. and Canada. (While at Saratoga, the 2nd Mass. held a private ceremony honoring those in the original unit who died in the Saratoga battles, and also commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the reenactment unit.)

The 2nd New Jersey, whose commander is the current mid-Atlantic coordinator for the Continental Line, also brought a sizeable contingent to Saratoga. This group has a longstanding association with Morristown NHP. Several unit members have volunteered there for many years, and many feel a strong sense of stewardship and commitment to the park. "It's home," one of those volunteers told me.

Other attending units included the Regiment Saintonge, which portrays French soldiers allied with the Continental forces. One member of this unit acts as adjutant at the Battle Road event, and is currently coordinator of the Continental Line's northern department. While there were no French troops at Saratoga, American successes at that battle were instrumental in convincing the French to support the American side. Both reenactors and park staff played up this connection in explaining Saintonge's presence during the weekend—an instance of both groups shading the definition of what was "authentic."

Audience surveys

Saratoga NHP is a large, open park, with a nine-mile loop of road connecting ten tour stops. The Neilson House is at one of those stops, and for the purpose of talking to visitors I concentrated my attention there, rather than attempting to catch them at other points within the far-flung park. I spoke with 30 individuals and groups around the Neilson House, and 13 in the nearby reenactor camp. Of the 43 visitors I surveyed, 28 (65%) returned my follow-up survey in the mail.

- 72% had been to Saratoga before
- 68% of these had been to the park four or more times previously.

Reasons why people chose to visit Saratoga that day:

To see reenactors	mentioned 20 times
Bicycling/hiking/etc.	5
Curiosity about park or encampment	5
Enjoying park scenery, weather	4
Visiting friends/family	3
Children interested	3
Touring area	2
Serving as park volunteer	2
Celebrating Father's Day	1

- 74% were aware that the reenactors would be at the park.
  Most mentioned having read about the event in a local newspaper.

- Only one respondent was acquainted with any of the reenactors at the park.
- However, 72% reported having seen reenactors at other sites, including at Saratoga NHP in the past.

What reenactor activities did you see at the park?

Drill/marching	mentioned 21 times
Camp life	11
Firing demonstration	7
Cooking	6
Children in camp	4
Reenactor interpretation	4
Crafts/sewing	3
Ranger interpretation	2
Children's "firelock drill"	1

What part of the reenactor presentations did you enjoy the most?

Talking to reenactors	9
Musket firing	7
Drill	6
Interpretation/explanation	5
Uniforms/equipment	3
Realism of reenactors	2
Rangers' interpretation	2
Seeing camp life	2
Everything	2

Children's "firelock drill"	1
Music	1

Was there any part of the reenactor presentation that you did not enjoy or found disappointing?

No battles	mentioned 7 times
Too few activities	2
Too few reenactors	2
Wanted to have food for sale	2
Activities too far apart	1
Cannons not fired	1
Poor sight lines	1
Not enough publicity for event	1
Not enough interpretation	1
Not enough interaction w/ reenactors	1

Visitors at Saratoga seemed more critical than those at Kings Mountain, less so than those at Minute Man. 18% at Saratoga stated they were disappointed not to see a reenacted battle, as compared with 23% at Minute Man.

86% of respondents said that the reenactors had definitely been an important part of their visit to Saratoga. 14% felt they had been "somewhat important."

79% felt the reenactors had presented a realistic picture of the past, while 21% felt it was "somewhat realistic."

Follow-up

Several of the units at Saratoga completed the reenactor survey developed for this study, so I was able to collect their written comments about the event after it was over. All felt it had been a successful event, although with some reservations. One wrote:

> *The Park staff understood that the reenactors were skilled in their area of expertise (living history). This led to correct expectations for everyone involved. Essentially the Park took care of wood, water, straw, and loos, and provided interpreters and interpretive programs which coincided well with programs put on by the reenactors. Throughout the weekend, the Park Staff and the reenactors worked together to demonstrate 18th century military life to the public and to solve any issues. From the press coverage of the event, the public thought the event was very successful and informative.*

Another reenactor echoed the idea that the event had been successful because the public had been well served:

> *The structure and scheduling of the event…permitted many opportunities*

> *to interact with the public, and give them a chance to see the camps, equipment, uniforms, etc., closeup. It provided a great educational opportunity to reach the public.*

Another felt the event had been successful because *"many public came to see the reenactors"* and *"we got to stay overnight in the park."* A reenactor in the same unit echoed the generally positive evaluation, but added that low attendance (presumably among the reenactors) and limited activities were aspects of the weekend that had bothered him. Several reenactors commented to me over the weekend that a Continental Line garrison weekend held at a non-NPS site would have attracted more reenactors, although there was an additional problem of an extremely full schedule in June and a conflicting event the same weekend.

In retrospect, both park staff and the primary organizer among the reenactors felt that the Saratoga event had accomplished one of its major aims, which was to begin building a relationship between the park and Continental Line units. Reenactors reported that they were pleased with the high degree of support they had received from park staff. They felt that their skills were respected and trusted, and that all of their requests had been met.

"Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference," the organizer said, mentioning the fact that maintenance staff had cut kindling for the reenactors and that several staff members had made a point of saying goodbye at the end of the weekend. Rangers had also provided traffic control as reenactors were leaving, allowing them to drive a few hundred yards the wrong way on the tour road rather than have to travel several miles around the one-way loop to get to the exit.

Local units of the Continental Line and Saratoga NHP are now in the initial stages of talking about a small-scale 225th anniversary event at the park. No firm commitment has been made yet by either side, but they are actively exploring the idea for the fall of 2002.

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[1] My overview of commemorative activities at the three parks in this section will focus largely on performance forms. Although there is a very rich history of other kinds of commemoration at these sites, I have chosen to narrow my focus here in the interests of length and of keeping this study closely linked to the subject of reenactment.